

EXPRESSING SORROW OF THE HOUSE AT THE DEATH OF THE HONORABLE CHARLIE NORWOOD, MEMBER OF CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF GEORGIA

SPEECH OF

HON. HENRY E. BROWN, JR.

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 14, 2007

Mr. BROWN of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I join my colleagues in mourning the passing of CHARLIE NORWOOD. As a Member of Congress from the neighboring state of South Carolina, I was fortunate enough to serve with CHARLIE and see firsthand his dedication to public service. Coming to Congress with a medical background, CHARLIE championed issues regarding a patients' bill of rights which was designed to give people better access to healthcare. As a decorated Vietnam Veteran, CHARLIE was a fighter. He fought for 12 years as a member of Congress on behalf of his constituents. I worked with CHARLIE on a number of issues including education, military, and veterans' issues. As Subcommittee Chairman of Health on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, I had the pleasure of participating in a Town Hall meeting with the veterans from his district.

Diagnosed with cancer in 2006, CHARLIE continued to serve the people of Georgia bravely and honorably in the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES despite his ill health. He fought to the end, and in his final days, he returned home to be with his family.

CHARLIE will be sorely missed, but his legacy will never be forgotten. My thoughts and prayers are with his wife Gloria and his two children during this sad time.

RECOGNIZING RUTH ELVIRA DOBBINS

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 16, 2007

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in recognizing Ruth Elvira Dobbins of Sibley, Missouri. Ruth celebrated her 80th Birthday on January 17th and it is my privilege to offer her my warmest regards on achieving this important milestone. Ruth is a fine citizen of Missouri and the Sibley community. It is an honor to represent Ruth in the United States Congress, and I wish her all the best on this birthday and many more in the future.

THE PRESIDENT'S FY 2008 BUDGET

HON. JAMES R. LANGEVIN

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 16, 2007

Mr. LANGEVIN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my disappointment with the President's budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2008. The President has said repeatedly that he wants to work with the new leadership in Congress, but his budget request tells a dif-

ferent story. It is clear evidence that he has little interest in making the hard choices facing our Nation and that he continues to favor tax cuts for the wealthy at the expense of working Americans.

One of the most notable changes in this budget as compared with those of previous years is the inclusion of supplemental spending requests for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. I do appreciate this development, as it will enhance Congressional oversight, which has been sorely lacking in the past. However, this improvement does not alter my deep opposition to the President's plan to augment existing force levels in Iraq by 21,500 troops, a number that could increase significantly once additional support forces are considered. It has become evident that the problem in Iraq cannot be solved by more U.S. troops. As the Iraq Study Group and other experts have concluded, it requires a diplomatic and economic solution, as well as a renewed commitment by the Iraqi government to take greater control of its own security situation. Consequently, Congress will carefully scrutinize the supplemental funding request so that we continue to provide our men and women in uniform with the resources they need to remain safe and effective while moving toward a swift conclusion of our military operations in Iraq. The American people have asked us to act, and we will do so in the coming months.

Sadly, the remainder of the budget demonstrates the President's misplaced priorities and inability to operate within realistic expectations. Once again, the President claims he can have it both ways by making permanent tax cuts for the wealthiest while reaching a balanced budget by 2012. However, the numbers just don't add up. The President doesn't balance his budget through responsible decision-making; he does it by hoping for economic growth that may or may not occur. In fact, the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that the President has overestimated revenue projections in 2012 by more than \$150 billion, and that his budget would actually result in yet another deficit. One hundred and fifty billion dollars is more than a rounding error; it is wishful thinking.

What does the average Rhode Islander get from all of that deficit spending? Unfortunately, it's not much. The President's decision to extend tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans would cost hundreds of billions of dollars in lost revenue, necessitating drastic cuts to important services and resulting in a massive middle-class tax increase. By choosing to extend certain tax cuts expiring in 2010 instead of fixing the Alternative Minimum Tax, the President has made clear that his priorities are with the richest Americans and not the middle class.

Our Nation's most vulnerable populations would also be harmed by the proposed budget. The President has called for \$78 billion in cuts to Medicare and Medicaid, venerable programs that provide vital health care services to the elderly, the disabled and the poor. Part of those cuts would come from an 8 percent reduction in Medicare reimbursement rates to physicians. Congress has blocked such cuts in the past because we know how devastating they would be to our health care system, yet the President appears oblivious to how dangerous they would be. When I am in Rhode Island, I hear constantly from doctors about how proposed cuts to Medicare reimburse-

ment rates would result in their inability to treat Medicare patients. My State's 16 hospitals would not be able to meet the needs of the community, and our senior citizens would suffer as a result. While I agree that we need to address the long-term solvency of Medicare, any reforms should be implemented in a way that benefits, not damages, our Nation's health care system.

The budget would also threaten to repeal health insurance for Rhode Island children. Rhode Island is one of 18 States that have implemented the State Children's Health Insurance Program to exceed minimum federal standards. Rhode Island's program, Rite Care, has leveraged SCHIP funding to provide health insurance to children in families up to 250 percent of the poverty level, as well as to additional populations such as pregnant women and parents. We have worked hard to bring our insurance coverage rate for children to 94 percent—above the national average of 88 percent. The President's budget would penalize States that are succeeding under SCHIP and increase the uninsured rate among children when we should be going in the opposite direction.

As chairman of the Homeland Security Subcommittee on Emerging Threats, Cybersecurity and Science and Technology, I am concerned that the budget proposal does not invest appropriately in important homeland security initiatives. Despite tragedies experienced in Madrid and London, we continue to ignore the importance of rail security; the Transportation Security Administration budget contains only \$41 million for surface transportation security. The Bush Administration has also proposed cutting biodefense-related programs and the Department of Homeland Security's Science and Technology Directorate, both of which will help protect our Nation from emerging threats. Additionally, the budget would reduce funding for programs important to State and local law enforcement in Rhode Island, including the State Homeland Security Grant Program, which awarded \$45.2 million to Rhode Island from 2003 to 2006, and the Law Enforcement Terrorist Prevention Program, LETPP, from which Rhode Island received \$11.5 million in funding from 2004 to 2006. Despite their proven effectiveness in reducing crime in our communities, the Community Oriented Policing Service, COPS, and Justice Assistance Grants, JAGs, would also experience cuts in this budget proposal. The COPS program helps Rhode Island's law enforcement agencies hire police officers, enhance crime fighting technology, and support crime prevention initiatives, while JAG supports State and local drug task forces, community crime prevention programs and prosecution initiatives. In 2006 alone, Rhode Island received \$1.6 million in JAG funding and \$790,000 in COPS funding that helped keep Rhode Island families safe. An important component of homeland security includes providing our state and local law enforcement with the resources they need to be effective, and I will fight to block these proposed cuts.

A budget is more than a simple ledger of revenue and spending. It is a demonstration of priorities. In this case, the President's priorities are out of touch with what the American people want. The new leadership in Congress is ready to craft a budget that will support strengthening our national defense and will